

Welcome to Medicare









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"We can answer your Medicare questions 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visit www.medicare.gov on the web. Or, you can call a customer service representative at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

Look for your "Medicare & You" handbook for more information about Medicare. You will get this handbook soon."



Welcome to Medicare

You are getting this package because you will soon be covered by Medicare. Because you are entitled to Social Security retirement or disability benefits, you are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance), which is premium-free, and Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance), which you pay for.

This booklet introduces you to the Medicare Program and explains some very important decisions you need to make, including whether to keep Medicare Part B or not. It also includes information about the decisions you must make about your health care and prescription drug coverage.

To get a quick look at the decisions you need to make, see pages 2–5. Before you make these decisions, read the information on pages 6–25.

Decision 1: Decide if you want to keep Medicare Part B.

WHEN: You have to decide if you want to keep Medicare Part B by the effective date on the front of the enclosed Medicare card.

Yes, I want to KEEP Medicare Part B

- Cut out the enclosed card
- Sign the **front** of the card
- Keep the card with you

No, I DON'T want to keep Medicare Part B

- Check the box after "I don't want Medical Insurance" on the back of the card form
- Sign the back of the card
- Send back the *entire* card form with the Medicare card in the enclosed *envelope* before the effective date on the front of the Medicare card. Medicare will send you a new Medicare card that shows you have Medicare Part A only.

For more information about this decision, see pages 18–21.



Decision 2: Decide what Medicare health plan meets your needs.

WHEN: If you keep Medicare Part B, you should decide in the next six months what Medicare health plan you want. You can choose **one** of the following types of Medicare health plans.

Original Medicare Plan	Medicare Advantage Plan*	Other Medicare Health Plans*	
Medicare Part A and/or Part B	Medicare Health Maintenance Organization Plan	Medicare Cost Plans	
Additional coverage you may need Medicare Prescription Drug Plant and/or Medigap policy		Demonstrations	
	Medicare Private Fee-for- Service Plan	Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)	
	Medicare Special Needs Plan		
	* Most plans include prescription drug coverage.		

★ Important! You need Medicare Part B to join a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan. If you don't join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you will automatically be in the Original Medicare Plan. Generally, you also need Medicare Part B to buy a Medigap policy. For more information about this decision, see pages 12–16 and 22.

Decision 3: Decide if you want or need Medicare prescription drug coverage.

WHEN: You should decide in the next six months if you want Medicare prescription drug coverage.

- If you decide you want the Original Medicare Plan, and you want to get prescription drug coverage, you must join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. Generally, enrollment isn't automatic.
- You can get health coverage and coverage for prescriptions through a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan that offers prescription drug coverage.

You can join a Medicare plan that offers prescription drug coverage starting November 15, 2005 through May 15, 2006, or until three months after the month your Medicare coverage starts, whichever is later. For more information about this decision, see pages 23–24.



Decision 4: If you want the Original Medicare Plan, then decide if you want or need a Medigap policy.

WHEN: Once you are age 65 or older and enrolled in Medicare Part B, you have six months after the date your Medicare Part B starts to buy a Medigap policy.

- A Medigap (Medicare Supplement Insurance) policy is a health insurance policy sold by private insurance companies, that helps pay for some of the costs that the Original Medicare Plan doesn't pay for (see pages 13–14).
- It's important to make this decision no later than six months after the date your Medicare Part B starts because if you wait longer, you may pay more, or you may not be able to get the Medigap policy you want.

For more information about this decision, see page 25.

Medicare Overview

Before you decide if you want or don't want Medicare Part B, you should read the following pages. These pages provide an overview of the Medicare Program, Medicare Advantage and other Medicare Health Plans, and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans. This booklet also includes information about extra help for people with limited income and resources, to help pay for their health care and prescription drug costs (see page 17).

Medicare is a health insurance program for certain people. Medicare offers the following:

- Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance)
- Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance), including Medicare preventive services
- Medicare prescription drug coverage

Pages 7–11 provide a quick overview of each of these benefits.





Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance)

helps cover your inpatient care in hospitals, critical access hospitals, and skilled nursing home facilities (not custodial or long-term care). It also helps cover hospice care and some home health care. You must meet certain conditions to get these benefits.

Remember, look in your "Medicare & You" handbook, when you get it, for more information about these covered services.

Medicare Part A helps cover			
Hospital stays	Semiprivate room, meals, general nursing, and other hospital services and supplies. Includes inpatient care you get in critical access hospitals and mental health care.		
Skilled nursing facility care Up to 100 days	Semiprivate room, meals, skilled nursing services, rehabilitation services, other services and supplies (after a related three-day inpatient hospital stay).		
Home health care	Limited to reasonable and necessary part-time or intermittent skilled nursing care and home health aide services, as well as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language services, medical social services, durable medical equipment, medical supplies, and other services.		
Hospice care	Medical and support services in a Medicare-approved hospice for people with a terminal illness.		

Medicare Part B

Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance)

helps cover your doctors' services, outpatient care, and some other medical services that Part A doesn't cover, such as some of the services of physical and occupational therapists, and some home health care. Part B helps pay for these covered services and supplies when they are medically necessary.

Remember, look in your "Medicare & You" handbook, when you get it, for more information about these covered services.

hospital services

In most cases, Medicare Part B covers			
Medical and other services * Medicare covers a the first six months	Doctors' services (not routine physical exams)*, outpatient medical and surgical services and supplies, diagnostic tests, some ambulatory surgery center facility fees, and durable medical equipment. "Welcome to Medicare" one-time physical exam within s you have Part B.		
Clinical laboratory services	Blood tests, urinalyses, and additional services as described in your "Medicare & You" handbook.		
Home health care	Limited to reasonable and necessary part-time or intermittent skilled nursing care and home health aide services as well as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech-language services, and additional services as described in your "Medicare & You" handbook.		
Outpatient	Hospital services and supplies received as an		

outpatient as part of a doctor's care.



Medicare Part B-Covered Preventive Services

Medicare Part B-Covered Preventive Services

Medicare Part B helps pay for many preventive services to help keep you healthy. You must have Medicare Part B to get help paying for these Medicare-covered preventive services. Look in your "Medicare & You" handbook, when you get it, for more information about these covered services.

- One-time "Welcome to Medicare" Physical Exam
- Bone Mass Measurements
- Cardiovascular Screenings
- Colorectal Cancer Screening
- Diabetes Screenings
- Flu Shots

- Glaucoma Tests
- Hepatitis B Shots
- Pap Test and Pelvic Exam
- Prostate Cancer Screening
- Pneumococcal Shot
- Screening Mammogram

★ Important! If you decide to keep Medicare Part B, you can call your doctor and schedule an appointment for the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam. This exam is a one-time review of your health, as well as education and counseling about the preventive services you need, including certain screenings and shots. Referrals for other care if you need it are also covered. Medicare covers this physical exam only if you get it within the first six months that you have Medicare Part B.

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Starting January 1, 2006, Medicare prescription drug coverage will be available to everyone with Medicare. Medicare prescription drug coverage is insurance. Private companies provide this coverage. You choose the drug plan and pay a monthly premium. Like other insurance, if you decide not to join when you are first eligible, you may pay a penalty if you choose to join later. See below and page 11 for more information about Medicare drug plans.

Medicare Drug Plans

There are two types of Medicare plans that provide insurance coverage for prescription drugs. There will be prescription drug coverage that is a part of Medicare Advantage Plans and other Medicare Health Plans. There will also be Medicare prescription drug coverage that adds coverage to the Original Medicare Plan, and some Medicare Cost Plans and Medicare Private Fee-for-Service Plans. These plans will be offered by insurance companies and other private companies approved by Medicare.

★ Important! You can't have a Medigap policy that has prescription drug coverage and Medicare prescription drug coverage (see page 14).



Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage (continued)

How to join in a Medicare Drug Plan

- You can first join starting November 15, 2005, through May 15, 2006, or until three months after the month your Medicare coverage starts, whichever is later.
- After this initial period, you can change your plan from November 15 through December 31 each year. Your coverage would begin January 1 of the following year.

Medicare Drug Plan Costs

- Most people will pay a monthly premium to join a Medicare drug plan.
- Your costs will vary depending on which plan you choose.
- If you don't join a Medicare drug plan within three months after your Medicare coverage begins or by May 15, 2006 (whichever is later), and you don't currently have a drug plan that, on average, covers at least as much as standard Medicare prescription drug coverage, when you do join a Medicare drug plan, your premium cost will go up at least 1% per month for every month that you wait to join. Like other insurance, you will have to pay this penalty as long as you have Medicare prescription drug coverage.

If you have or are eligible for prescription drug coverage from an employer or union, TRICARE, the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA), the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, or a state program, read all the materials you get from your insurer or plan provider. If you still have questions, talk to your benefits administrator, insurer, or plan provider before you make any changes to your current coverage. Your costs may be different if you have limited income and resources (see page 17).

Medicare Health Plan Choices

Medicare gives you choices on how you can get your Medicare health and prescription coverage. You can get your Medicare health coverage through the Original Medicare Plan, or a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan. You can get your prescription drug coverage from a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan, or a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan that offers prescription drug coverage.

The Original Medicare Plan pays for many health care services and supplies, but it doesn't pay for everything. To help cover extra health care costs, you may want to get a Medigap (Medicare Supplement Insurance) policy. A Medigap policy is a health insurance policy sold by private insurance companies to fill the "gaps" in Original Medicare Plan coverage. You may also want to join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan to help pay for your prescription drugs. You can choose one or both of these types of additional coverage.

In most of these plans, generally there are extra benefits and lower copayments than in the Original Medicare Plan. However, you may have to see doctors that belong to the plan or go to certain hospitals to get services. If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you don't need a Medigap policy.

The next four pages have important information about your Medicare health plan choices and the additional coverage you might want to get if you choose the Original Medicare Plan.

★ Remember! Your Medicare benefits and plan options are explained in more detail in your "Medicare & You" handbook. You will get this handbook soon.



Original Medicare Plan

The Original Medicare Plan is a fee-for-service plan available nationwide. You can see any doctor or provider. No referrals are necessary.

In the Original Medicare Plan, if you have Medicare Part A and/or Part B, you get all the Part A and/or Part B covered services listed on pages 7–9. You must pay a monthly Part B premium (\$78.20 in 2005) to get the Medicare Part B-covered services. You may have to pay additional costs like a deductible, coinsurance, or copayment for some Medicare-covered services.

In addition to the Original Medicare Plan, you can buy the following additional coverage to help pay your health care costs:

- Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and/or
- Medigap policy

See the next page for details.

★ Important! Medigap policies aren't available in all states for people with a disability or who have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). For more information, call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program. To get their telephone number call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

Original Medicare Plan with Additional Coverage

Medigap Policy

Coverage

 Policies may cover deductibles, coinsurance, copayments, health care while traveling outside the U.S., prescription drugs (if the policy is bought before January 1, 2006), and more. There are 12 different Medigap policies (Plans A through L).

Buying a policy

- Generally, you need Medicare Part A <u>AND</u> Part B.
- You pay a monthly premium for a Medigap policy in addition to the Part B premium.

When you can buy

• The best time to buy a policy is when you are age 65 or older AND enroll in Part B. This starts your six-month Medigap open enrollment period. If you don't buy a policy when first eligible, you may pay more or may not get the policy you want.

Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

Coverage

- Covers a variety of generic and brand name prescription drugs.
- Call the plan for a list of participating pharmacies and a list of covered prescription drugs.

Joining a drug plan

- You need Medicare Part A AND/OR Part B.
- You pay a monthly premium for both Part B (if you have Part B) and a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan.

When you can join

- From November 15, 2005 through May 15, 2006. See page 11 for more information.
- If you don't enroll before May 15, 2006, or when first eligible, you may pay a penalty.

For additional health care coverage, you can choose one or both of these plans as described above. See page 25 for more information about Medigap policies.



Medicare Advantage Plans and Other Medicare Health Plans

You must have both Medicare Part A <u>AND</u> Part B to join a Medicare Advantage Plan. You must continue to pay the monthly Medicare Part B premium (\$78.20 in 2005) to get the Medicare Part B-covered services. These plans are available in most areas of the country.

If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan, you will get at least all the Medicare Part A and Part B covered services listed on pages 7–9. In most of these plans, generally there are extra benefits and lower copayments than in the Original Medicare Plan. This coverage can include prescription drug coverage. Generally, you must get your care from doctors and hospitals on the plan's list. You will have one premium that includes coverage for Part A and Part B benefits, prescription drug coverage (if offered), and extra benefits (if offered). Your costs may vary depending on which plan you join and how much you pay for each visit or service.

The next page describes your Medicare Advantage Plan choices. In limited instances, other Medicare Health Plans may be available in your area. To find out which plans are available in your area, look at www.medicare.gov on the web. Select "Search Tools" at the top of the page. Or, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

★ Important! You don't need a Medigap policy (see page 14) if you join a Medicare Advantage Plan.

Medicare Advantage Plans and Other Medicare Health Plans

The following four types of Medicare Advantage Plans might be available in your area:

- 1. **Medicare Health Maintenance Plans (HMOs)**—You generally must get your care from a primary care doctor, specialists, or hospitals on the plan's list except in an emergency.
- 2. **Medicare Preferred Provider Organization Plans (PPOs)**—In most of these plans, you pay less if you use primary care doctors, specialists, or hospitals on the plan's list (network).
- 3. **Medicare Private Fee-for-Service Plans**—You can see any doctor that accepts the plan's payment.
- 4. **Medicare Special Needs Plans**—These plans, if available, provide more focused health care for specific groups of people. Eligibility is limited.
- ★ Tip! You can get help comparing Medicare Prescription Drug Plans, Medicare Advantage Plans and other Medicare Health Plans, and Medigap policies. Visit www.medicare.gov on the web. Select "Search Tools" at the top of the page. Or, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.



Extra help for people with limited income and resources

If you have limited income and resources, you may be able to get help paying for some of your health care and prescription drug costs. Listed below are some ways you can get help:

Help with prescription drug costs—If your income is limited and your resources are less than \$11,500 (if you are single) and \$23,000 (if you are married) in 2005, you might qualify for help paying for your drug plan's monthly premium, yearly deductible, and prescription copayments. To apply for this program, call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.

Medicaid—This is a joint Federal and state program that helps pay medical costs for some people with limited income and resources. For more information, call your State Medical Assistance office. You can get the telephone number from 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

Medicare Savings Programs—States have programs for people with limited income and resources that pay Medicare premiums and, in some cases, may also pay Medicare deductibles and coinsurance. For more information, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—SSI is a monthly benefit paid by the Social Security Administration to people with limited income and resources who are disabled, blind, or age 65 or older. For more information, call the SSA at 1-800-772-1213.

Decision 1: Decide if you want to keep Medicare Part B.

Now that you have learned about the Medicare Program; the Original Medicare Plan; Medicare Advantage Plans and other Medicare Health Plans; and Medicare drug plans, you need to decide if you want to keep Medicare Part B. Before you decide, you need to know the following:

Medicare Part B Costs

There is a monthly premium of \$78.20 (in 2005) for Medicare Part B. This premium is usually taken out of your monthly Social Security, Railroad Retirement, or Office of Personnel Management payment. This payment is taken out when your Medicare Part B coverage begins. If you aren't getting any of these payments, Medicare will bill you for your premium every three months.

Medicare Part B Coverage Begins

Look on your Medicare card (see enclosed card) to see when your Medicare Part B coverage starts. If you don't want Medicare Part B, make sure you return the *entire* card form *before* the effective date.

Keeping Medicare Part B

Keeping Medicare Part B is your choice. Except in special cases (see page 19), if you don't choose to keep Medicare Part B when you are first eligible, your monthly premium could be higher if you later decide you want it. If you keep Medicare Part B, you will get all the Medicare Part B-covered services, listed on pages 8–9. If you don't keep Medicare Part B, Medicare won't pay for these services, including the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam.



Decision 1: (continued)

You may not need Medicare Part B yet if

- you are age 65 or older and you or your spouse (of any age) are working **and** you are covered by an employer or union group health plan based on that current employment, or
- you are under age 65 and disabled and you or any member of your family are working **and** you are covered by an employer or union group health plan based on that current employment.

If this applies to you, you can sign up for Medicare Part B during the Special Enrollment Period. You can enroll in Medicare Part B anytime you are still covered by an employer or union group health plan based on your or your spouse's (or family member's, if you are disabled) current employment, or during the eight months following the month that the employment ends or the group health plan coverage ends, whichever is first. Most people who sign up for Medicare Part B during a Special Enrollment Period don't pay higher premiums. You may also want to buy a Medigap policy during this period (see page 25).

If you are still working and plan to keep your employer or union group health plan coverage, you should talk to your employer benefits administrator or your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to help you decide the best time to enroll in Medicare Part B. To get your SHIP's telephone number, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

★ Tip! For questions about how your retiree coverage works with Medicare, call the benefits administrator at your former employer or union.

Decision 1: (continued)

Delaying Medicare Part B

If you don't take Medicare Part B now

• you may have to wait until the General Enrollment Period to sign up (January 1 through March 31 each year). Your Medicare Part B coverage would start July of that year. The cost of Medicare Part B will go up 10% for each full 12-month period that you could have had Medicare Part B but didn't take it, except in special cases (see page 19). You will have to pay this penalty as long as you have Medicare Part B.

Enrolling in Medicare Part B for Military Retiree Benefits

You must have Medicare Part A <u>AND</u> Part B to get TRICARE for Life benefits (known as Military Retiree Benefits).

★ **Tip!** For more information about signing up for Medicare Part B, call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.



Decision 1: (continued)

Do you want to keep Medicare Part B or not?

Now that you have read the information in this booklet, you will need to make a decision about your Medicare Part B coverage. If you have questions about enrolling in Medicare Part B, you can call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.

My Decision: ☐ Keep Medicare Part B or ☐ Don't keep Medicare Part B

★ Important! If you don't want Medicare Part B, return the *entire* card form **before** the effective date.

Decision 2: Decide what Medicare health plan meets your needs.

If you decide to keep Medicare Part B, you should decide what Medicare health plan meets your needs. For details about Medicare health plans, see pages 12–16.

My Options for Medicare health plans:			
☐ Original Medicare Plan			
Original Medicare Plan with a Medigap policy			
☐ Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan			

For information about Medigap policies, see pages 14 and 25.

Decision 3:Decide if you want or need prescription drug coverage.



The way you get your Medicare health care affects how you can get your Medicare prescription drug coverage. If you want prescription drug coverage, you can get one of the following plans:

- Medicare prescription drug coverage with the Original Medicare Plan
 To get Medicare prescription drug coverage with the Original Medicare Plan, you will need
 to join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. You must have Medicare Part A <u>OR</u> Part B to join
 a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (see pages 10–11). For information about the Original
 Medicare Plan, see page 13.
- Medicare prescription drug coverage through a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan

To get Medicare drug coverage through a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan, you will need to join a plan that offers prescription drug coverage. These plans are available in many areas. In most of these plans, generally there are extra benefits and lower copayments than in the Original Medicare Plan. However, you may have to see doctors that belong to the plan or go to certain hospitals to get services. If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you don't need a Medigap policy. You must have Medicare Part A <u>AND</u> Part B to join most Medicare Advantage Plans or other Medicare Health Plans. For information about Medicare Advantage Plans or other Medicare Health Plans, see pages 15–16.

Decision 3: (continued)

Note: Your current or former employer or union may provide coverage for prescription drugs. You should contact your employer or union benefits administrator before making a decision about your Medicare prescription drug coverage.

My Options for prescription drug coverage:

- ☐ Original Medicare Plan and a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan
- ☐ Original Medicare Plan and a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan and a Medigap policy (that doesn't cover prescription drugs)
- ☐ Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan with prescription drug coverage
- ☐ Have drug coverage from an employer or union, TRICARE, Veterans Affairs (VA), or Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program (Look at your "Medicare & You 2006 Handbook" for more information about these programs).

Decision 4: If you want the Original Medicare Plan, then decide if you want or need a Medigap policy.



If you decide you want to keep Medicare Part B and you want your health care through the Original Medicare Plan, you will need to decide if you want to buy a Medigap policy. A Medigap policy is a health insurance policy sold by private insurance companies to fill the "gaps" in Original Medicare Plan coverage. Once you are age 65 or older AND enrolled in Medicare Part B, you start your Medigap open enrollment period. This period lasts for six months. If you buy a Medigap policy after this period, you may have to pay more or you may not get the policy you want. During this period, an insurance company can't deny you any Medigap policy it sells, make you wait for coverage to start, or charge you more for a policy because of your health problems. To learn more, get a free copy of "Choosing a Medigap Policy: A Guide to Health Insurance for People With Medicare" (CMS Pub. No. 02110) by calling 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

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If you are age 65 or older, you will need to decide if you want or need a Medigap policy.

- ☐ Don't need a Medigap policy
- ☐ Need a Medigap policy

To find out when your Medigap open enrollment period ends

- look at your Medicare Part B start date (see enclosed card), and
- add six months to your Medicare Part B start date.

You should buy your Medigap policy before this date.

Contact Information

For Information About...

- How to enroll in Medicare or correct your Medicare card
- Supplemental Security Income and help paying your Medicare prescription drug coverage costs
- Medicare, in general, and Medicare health and prescription drug plan choices in your area
- Your rights if you believe you have been discriminated against because of your race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or age

Contact...

Social Security Administration www.socialsecurity.gov 1-800-772-1213 TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.

Medicare

www.medicare.gov 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

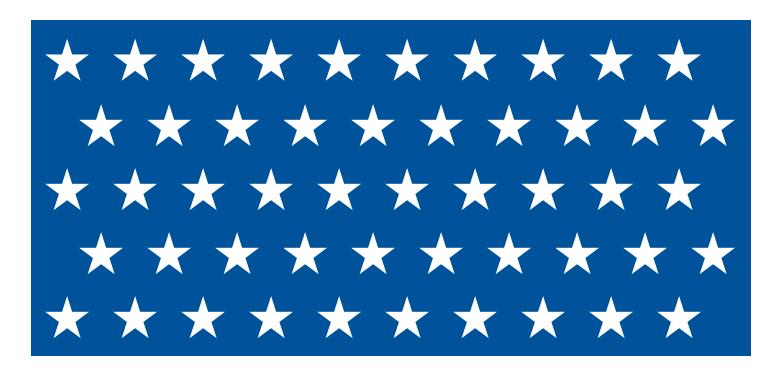
The Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights www.hhs.gov/ocr 1-800-368-1019
TTY users should call 1-800-537-7697.

"Welcome to Medicare" explains the Medicare Program. It isn't a legal document. The official Medicare Program provisions are contained in the relevant laws, regulations, and rulings.



Notes

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Medicare is managed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). CMS is part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Social Security Administration works with CMS by enrolling people in Medicare and collecting Medicare premiums.



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